

The University of Toledo
Spring Commencement
Saturday, May 3, 2014
2 p.m. Ceremony Speaker

PROFILE OF MR. G. RANGASWAMY



Mr. Rangaswamy, son of Shri G.R. Govindarajulu and Smt. G. Chandrakanthi, is currently the Chairman of the Chandra Group of Companies and Managing Trustee of the GRG Trust in Coimbatore.

His mission has been to be of service to the local and global communities through philanthropy by the creation, expansion and management of educational institutions and industries for training and employing the workforce of tomorrow.

The Chandra Group has sales revenue of about Rs. 330 Crores (US\$ 55.0 million) and employs about 1,500 people. It is engaged in textiles and automotive business. Group companies include the Chandra Textiles Private Limited, Chandra Automobile India Private Limited, Lakshmigraha Enterprises, Lakshmigraha Worldwide Inc. and Chandra Quick Lube.

Mr. Rangaswamy has been the torch bearer of the motto and objectives set by his illustrious parents to 'empower women through education'.

The GRG Trust manages 11 educational institutions with student strength of over 12,000. These institutions cover education from the kindergarten class to undergraduate, post graduate and doctoral degrees. These include the Blue Gems Montessori, Chandra Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Chandrakanthi Public School, GR Govindarajulu School of Applied Computer Technology, GRG Memorial Tribal Higher Secondary School, GRG Polytechnic College, GRG School of Management Studies, OSCAR (Out of school Care and Recreation), PSGR

Krishnammal College for Women, PSGR Krishnammal Higher Secondary School for Girls and PSGR Krishnammal Nursery and Primary School. The GRG Memorial Tribal Higher Secondary School, located in a remote village in the Nilgiris, is a shining example of his dedication to the cause of upliftment of the underprivileged and tribal children, wherein the Trust provides free education to around 800 children living in the locality.

Mr. Rangaswamy is also a Founder Trustee of the PSG & Sons Charities Trust, set up in 1926 by Shri P.S. Govindaswamy Naidu's four sons with the intention of serving the society by providing quality education motivated by charitable intentions. Today, the Trust has under its fold more than six professional and arts and science colleges including a most modern medical college and hospital with nearly 1,000 beds. The student strength of the institutions is around 18,000. During his tenure as the Managing Trustee of the PSG & Sons Charities Trust, Mr. Rangaswamy spearheaded the modernization of the hospital and concluded collaborative arrangements with medical equipment manufacturers to bring the best possible health care to people. It was also during his tenure that the first foreign collaboration was entered into by PSG Institutions with the College of Business, University of Toledo. More academic collaborations were forged with SUNY, Farmingdale, San Diego State University, and Colorado State University and other universities in the USA; universities in Germany, Switzerland, U.K., Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Australia.

Mr. Rangaswamy is a keen activist of environmental protection and an ardent nature lover. He is a passionate ecologist. He is the founder and serves as the Secretary of the Coimbatore Zoological Park and Conservation Centre, founded in 1986. The objective of the zoo is not only to conserve wildlife, but also provide the people of Coimbatore an opportunity to enjoy nature. He is concerned deeply about environmental issues including global warming and deforestation. He advocates conservation of the flora and fauna and constantly works towards nature-friendly activities. He spends most of his leisure time in the forests adjoining his school for tribal children.

The 62-year old Rangaswamy has a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce from Coimbatore and a Masters in Business Administration Degree from United States International University, San Diego, California, USA.

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO, USA

Distinguished President Dr. Lloyd Jacobs,

Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Joseph Zerbey

Members of the Platform Party

Provost, Dr. Scott Scarborough

Parents

Friends from the Media

Students

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is an honour and privilege for me to stand before you and deliver the Commencement Address. As an honorary graduate of this great university it is also my pleasure to congratulate you for achieving one of your cherished goals. I see the joy, happiness, and pride in the eyes of your parents and family members.

I was pleasantly surprised to receive President Jacob's invitation to deliver the commencement address. And, immediately began thinking what insights I could bring today, particularly because my life experiences in India are so very different from yours. Nevertheless, here I am and I thank you sincerely for this privilege.

Commencement denotes the beginning of a new chapter in your lives, beyond the graduate school and your immediate plans for employment. You will be asking yourselves what this new life should be. To me, it would symbolise the start of a great future and the beginning of your 'giving back to the society' for what the society has given to you all these years. This brings me to some of the thoughts which I would like to share with you today.

It is well accepted that we are living in a world that is increasingly globalised. With the ongoing political changes and the onslaught of the advancements in technology, we are today witnessing never-before-changes happening around us. While many of these changes are positive, they have ushered in an era of uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. For instance, we are witnessing the impact of Chinese growth prospects on the fortunes of the Wall Street, which was not even imaginable when I was your age.

We have come to realise that actions of people to meet their needs in one part of the world have significant impact on those living in other parts. Deforestation in Indonesia, Amazon, and use of wood for cooking in India, for example, have serious environmental implication for other countries. Unfortunately, there are not enough compassionate people in power willing to listen to the travails of Mother Earth. She is being exploited every day by power-hungry, profit-motivated people for personal gains, over-consuming her natural resources, creating perilous scarcity, and disregarding the destructive damage to environment. She does not have any more energy left in her to quench the thirst of the humans. It is now up to you, the graduating students, to listen to the cries of Mother Earth and do whatever you can to alleviate her pains.

What we collectively do today will have far-reaching implications for tomorrow's generations.

What is sustainable development? According to one definition it is, *'to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*.

What are those that need to be sustained? Biodiversity, Ecosystem, Resources, Environment, and Cultures will be some of those.

What are those that need to be developed? Child Survival, Life Expectancy, Education, Equality, Equal Opportunity, Wealth, Institutions, Social Capital, and Regions will be some.

So, sustainable development would encompass all these and more. Some may appear to be self-contradictory, but they are not. Each element of sustainable development has its own importance and needs to be carefully nurtured and cared for.

Given the enormity of the challenges, what can you do?

You can campaign to get people committed to sustainable development elected to policy making positions so that they can initiate actions to pursue a path of sustainable development. You can take some seemingly small actions such as switching off your computers and lights when not in use, using public transport,

practising a driving skill aimed at a more efficient use of the gasoline, and minimising water usage and wastage can go a long way in saving the environment.

The website - Oikos.com - serves professionals whose work promotes sustainable design and construction. Oikos, in Greek, means 'house'. It is also the roots of two English words – Ecology and Economy – seemingly self-contradictory, but in reality not. Ecology examines the web of life where plants, animals, rocks and gases all affect one another and interact in their natural communities. Economy means thrift and sound management of community resources. It is based on consumption of natural capital. For example, excessive exploration for oil ends up in depleting the reserves, endangering its supply to future industries and generations. Therefore, ecology and economy are closely interlinked. In fact, they would need to be threads of the same fabric if humans are to become more productive members of the community of Earth.

You may have read the second instalment of the 5th Assessment Report (AR5) released on the 31st of March this year by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It is very revealing, and at the same time, quite disturbing. The essence of the report is that climate change is a long-term challenge but one that requires urgent action today. We need to focus on the fundamentals and on

actions. Unless we are united today in our fight for environmental protection, we will need to prepare for the worst.

I believe that all of you, the graduating students of the Class of 2014, should commit yourselves to creating a world that cares for its environment and leave a beautiful, comfortable, enjoyable, and life sustaining world for the next generation and generations to come.

There is yet another very vital element in sustainable development. And, that is the role of women in our society. Although not perfect, the USA is in the forefront of affirmative action and proclaimed equality to women. You have reasonably successfully managed gender-bias and gender-discrimination issues. But, if you look around the world, particularly in developing and underdeveloped countries, you will find that women are not yet given their rightful place in society. I know that in India we are still struggling with this issue. Though there are minimal perceptible changes in recent years, there is no wide spread acceptance of the need for treating women with the dignity and equality that they deserve. It is still a 'man's world' out there!

History is replete with instances of women having donned leadership roles very successfully and with aplomb. In India, we are very proud of Indra Nooyi, the CEO of

PepsiCo. The appointments of Mary Barra as CEO of General Motors, Janet Yellen as the Chairperson of the US Federal Reserve, and Christine Lagarde as the Managing Director the World Bank have been widely acclaimed. There are women CEOs of many other global companies. We also have women who have, in their own way, helped transformation of the society by their selfless service, often at great personal sacrifice. The young Malala from Pakistan who stood up to the Taliban to fight for the rights of women to education or the selfless service of Mother Theresa to the poorest of the poor and the most deprived sections of the society are examples of such transformational humans. There have also been very influential women heads of government – Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, Margaret Thatcher of UK, Indira Gandhi of India, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, and Golda Meir of Israel are a few who have made such a significant impact on the society they led. Empowered women can contribute significantly to sustainable development in equal measure.

Dear graduating students, today is a great day for all of you. You have earned your right to a degree from this prestigious university and thus you have earned your right to chart your own future. As I said earlier, the future will take you to a world that is quite uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. We are no longer living in an island of prosperity, isolated from others. We are living in a society where peaceful co-existence has become imperative. The rich and the poor are no longer isolated; each

has an impact on the other. If we ignore the protestations of the poor, we lose the prerogative of the rich. It is the bounden duty – morally and ethically – of the rich to care for the concerns of the poor. It is for you to decide how to address these emerging new realities and how you want your future to be. Some of us from the earlier generation have failed in making this world a better place for you to live in. I hope that you will forgive us and make amends for our failure and ensure that you leave this world a better place for future generations.

Life is not about how long you live, but how you live! Your contributions to the society will define ‘how’ you lived in this world. Steve Jobs showed us that innovation and out-of-the-box thinking can change the world forever. Bill Gates has been showing us for nearly three decades how technology can be harnessed for the benefit of humanity. Pepsi and Coca Cola have shown us the power of a brand. Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela have shown us the power of non-violence and peaceful co-existence. I think there are many such leaders among you gathered here today. You can make a mark and leave a legacy behind you. You too can play a meaningful role to improve the lives of the poorest of the poor. Nothing can really give you greater satisfaction than the smiles on the faces of people you helped to change for the better.

I quote the words of President John Kennedy, from his inaugural address over 50 years ago. *“Ask not what the country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country”*. Unquote

I wish you a very bright, healthy future and a very successful life ahead.

I thank the President and members of the University of Toledo once again for this honour.

Thank you and God bless!